Visualization: A Key Tool in Comprehension

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**Abstract**

Visualization is a way for students to understand what they read by creating mental images or movies in their heads. Visualizing helps students remember what they read through their own created images. Not all people visualize when they read, but for some people it comes very natural (Liang and Galda 2010). Visualization helps with comprehension by keeping the students interested in what they read (Gregory and Cahill 2010). Not only do students visualize when they read, but also when they are being told a story. Visualization is an important tool that can be used throughout a student’s life to comprehend what they read.

**Visualization through Story Telling**

For many young students, listening to the teacher read a story does not always keep their attention. Simply telling the children to visualize as they listen will most likely not work. Most of the kids will not even understand what visualizing means. What Erin McTigue (2010) discovered was that her class of second graders, really began to visualize the story when she set the mood to tell it. She told a story in a dark setting, which brought mystery and wonder into the children’s minds. The story matched the setting and the students were swept away into their own visualizations they were creating. During the story there were whispers of inferences, and predictions going around the classroom of students. After the story, it was clear that there was a high level of comprehension from the students. The story telling resulted in a lot of interaction from the students in an enthusiastic discussion. What started off as a story time, turned into a discussion of the student’s comprehension through visualization.

**The Different Ways to Visualize**

Every person visualizes in a different way, and some people visualize more than others. Gregory and Cahill, (2010) have an excellent way of describing to common ways that people visualize when they read. One way is that people create mental images to go along with different parts of the story. This is a very simple and common way people visualize. Another, more complex way, of visualization is what is called “mind movies” (Gregory and Cahill 2010, p.516). A “mind movie” is the story coming to life in the reader’s head. The reader actual creates an entire visual movie all in their mind. These ways of visualization lead to making connections in the text, asking questions, and inferencing. All of this is a way for students to comprehend what they are reading. Visualization is a direct line to helping students in the comprehension of the text.

**The Visualization of Poetry**

A big thing that almost every student has trouble understanding is poetry. It can be very difficult for students to comprehend because of the language that is used, the style that it is written in, and the interpretation (Liang and Galda). A good exercise for students to do is to visualize everything in the poem. Many poems have very descriptive, graphic language that can lead to visualization. If a student has trouble understanding a poem, Liang and Galda (2010) suggest that the student should try to draw out their visualization. They can put what is in their head down on paper and begin a discussion from there. It is an excellent way for students to learn to comprehend poetry.

**References**

Liang, L.A. and Galda L. (2010). Responding and Comprehending:

Reading With Delight and Understanding. *The Reading Teacher, 63*(6), 515-520.